

Media statement

Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs / International Relations 4 September 2020

1. The Stand-alone Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs / International Relations under the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation was held via videoconferencing on 4 September 2020.

2. The Ministers exchanged views on major international and regional issues in the political, security, economic, trade, financial and sustainable development spheres, as well as reviewed the progress in intra-BRICS activities. They discussed also the possibilities for mutual support of their initiatives and closer cooperation at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly.

3. They recalled that 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The Ministers expressed support for continued cooperation of BRICS countries in areas of mutual interest, including through regular exchanges amongst their Permanent Missions to the United Nations and in other international fora.

4. The Ministers reminded that, born out of the horrors of Second World War, the United Nations, as a common endeavor for humanity, was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. They expressed support for the high-level event on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. The Ministers further called for a resolute stand against the rehabilitation of Nazi ideology, racism and xenophobia and the distortion of history. They reaffirmed the need to strengthen international cooperation to build a brighter shared future for the international community. They emphasized their support to efforts towards making international governance more inclusive, representative and participatory with greater participation of emerging markets and developing countries in international decision-making.

5. The Ministers reaffirmed the commitment to upholding and respecting international law, including the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and to the central role of the UN in an international system in which sovereign States cooperate to maintain peace and security, advance sustainable development and ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. They also underlined the imperative that international organizations be fully driven by Member States and promote the interests of all. They called for the 75th anniversary of the UN to be celebrated by enhanced efforts to establish a more fair, just, inclusive, equitable and representative multipolar international system based on sovereign equality of States, non-intervention in their internal affairs, cooperation and mutual respect for interests and concerns of all. They underlined, in this regard, the imperative of refraining from any coercive measures not based on international law and the UN Charter.

6. The Ministers recalled the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security

Council, with a view to making it more representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of the developing countries so that it can adequately respond to global challenges. China and Russia reiterated the importance they attach to the status and role of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.

7. The Ministers acknowledged the Joint Statement by BRICS Trade Ministers on Multilateral Trading System and the WTO Reform on 23 July 2020 and reaffirmed their support for a transparent, open, inclusive and non-discriminatory rules-based multilateral trading system, as embodied in the WTO. They reiterated the importance of WTO reform and emphasized the central role of the WTO in promoting predictability, stability and legal certainty for international trade. They underlined the importance of all WTO Members abiding by WTO rules and complying with their commitments, thus avoiding unilateral and protectionist measures, which run counter to the spirit and the rules of the WTO. The Ministers stressed the urgency of ensuring the restoration and preservation of the normal functioning of the WTO Dispute Settlement System. They noted also the importance of adopting trade facilitation measures to promote trade relations among BRICS countries.

8. The Ministers recognized that current interconnected international challenges are a powerful reminder of the imperative to strengthen cooperation between States, and have to be addressed through reinvigorated diplomacy, strengthened and reformed multilateral system, including the UN, the WTO, the WHO, the IMF and other international organizations. The Ministers emphasized their grave concern over the major international challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its very serious health, social and economic impacts across the globe. They expressed their condolences for lives lost and their solidarity with the affected families, as well as their gratitude to all frontline health workers. The Ministers reiterated the pressing need to preserve jobs and income, in particular for the most vulnerable groups of society. They underscored the urgency of restoring international growth and international trade, strengthening markets stability and resilience. The Ministers stressed the value of cooperation between States, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

9. The Ministers recalled the decisions in the Ufa Declaration (2015) to intensify joint efforts on combating the risks of new infectious diseases. While acknowledging the role played by the WHO, they stressed the importance of enhancing BRICS countries' positive contribution to international public health security, the need to pursue coordinated and decisive actions, both individually and collectively, including in the framework of the UN, the WHO and other international organizations. They also expect that the international community will be reviewing and drawing lessons from measures taken at all levels to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, including by intergovernmental institutions, so as to identify good practices and ensure better international preparedness to help States to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and other current and future health challenges, including through mobilization of political support, financial investments and resources. They recalled the decision in the Johannesburg

Declaration (2018) to establish the BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre and encouraged its timely and effective operationalization.

10. The Ministers underscored the need for all relevant international organizations and financial institutions to collaborate vigorously in order to ensure that the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of social and economic rights and the right to development are addressed in a timely, comprehensive and integrated manner. In this regard, they stressed the importance of mitigating its consequences for sustainable development. They recommitted to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals in full and on time, as well of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement. They also acknowledged in this respect the Statement of the 6th BRICS Ministers of Environment Meeting on 30 July 2020.

11. The Ministers stressed the importance of intra-BRICS scientific, technical, innovation and entrepreneurship cooperation to achieve early economic recovery and high-quality development. In this regard, they recalled the Joint Declaration Regarding Strengthening Cooperation in the Area of the New Industrial Revolution adopted at the BRICS Industry Ministers Meeting on 24 August 2020 and commended the work of the PartNIR Advisory Group.

12. The Ministers noted with appreciation the role of the New Development Bank (NDB) in infrastructure and sustainable development financing and its contribution to the efforts of BRICS States to address the health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. They welcomed the decision of the NDB Board of Governors to establish an Emergency Assistance Facility up to USD 10 billion to meet related needs and the approval of 4 loans in the total amount of USD 4 billion. They also acknowledged the progress made by NDB in the preparatory work towards timely expansion of its membership.

13. The Ministers underlined the imperative of dialogue to address increasing international peace and security challenges through political and diplomatic means. They stressed the need to continue to work together in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, including by ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space activities as well as the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The Ministers emphasized the urgent need to negotiate a legally binding multilateral instrument that could fill the gap in the international legal regime applicable to outer space, including on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects. They stressed that practical transparency and confidence building measures may also contribute towards this goal.

14. The Ministers underscored the importance of developing further BRICS cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes, including through the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

15. The Ministers emphasized the paramount importance to comply with and to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (BTWC), including by adopting a Protocol to the Convention that provides for, inter alia, an efficient verification mechanism. They reaffirmed that

the BTWC is the core instrument for biological and toxin weapons. Its functions, including in what concerns the UN Security Council, should not be duplicated by other mechanisms. Efforts aimed at the resolution of implementation issues should be consistent with the BTWC.

16. The Ministers reaffirmed support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and called upon the State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to preserve the integrity of the CWC and engage in a constructive dialogue with a view to restoring the spirit of consensus in the OPCW.

17. The Ministers expressed concerns at the rise of violence and continuing conflicts in different parts of the world that have significant impact at both the regional and international levels. They concurred that, irrespective of their historic background and distinctive nature, conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means and diplomatic engagement through political dialogue and negotiations in line with principles and norms of international law, particularly the UN Charter. The Ministers noted the UNSC Resolution 2532(2020) demanding a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on its agenda with the exception of military operations against terrorist groups, which have been designated by the UN Security Council, and calling for durable humanitarian pause against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. The Ministers expressed deep concern over the situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and emphasized that conflicts and crises in the region should be resolved by political and diplomatic means via inclusive dialogue. The Ministers endorsed the Media Statement of the Meeting of BRICS Deputy Ministers/Special Envoys (MENA) on 26 August 2020.

19. The Ministers expressed concern over the security situation and continuing armed conflicts in parts of Africa and called for international support for regional and subregional initiatives aimed at strengthening peace and security in Africa based on the principle “African solutions to African problems” as articulated by Africans themselves. They further commended the African Union’s commitment to promote the “Silencing the Guns by 2020” initiative and underscored the importance of an enhanced partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of international peace and security.

20. The Ministers expressed serious concern over the situation in Mali. They recalled that the United Nations and the African Union have underlined the urgent need to restore the constitutional order. They called upon all stakeholders to work constructively with ECOWAS to find a peaceful solution to the current impasse and to restore constitutional and democratic order in the country.

21. The Ministers called for establishing long-term peace in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the basis of successful, direct and inclusive Intra-Afghan negotiations supported by international partners. The peace process should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. They condemned in the strongest terms the recent terrorist attacks that took place in Afghanistan.

22. The Ministers expressed their support for continuing the diplomatic negotiations in bilateral and multilateral formats to resolve all issues pertaining to the Korean Peninsula, including its denuclearization, and maintain peace and

stability in North East Asia. They reaffirmed the commitment for a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation.

23. The Ministers reiterated their strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed, and that it should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. They reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to contribute further to the global efforts of preventing and countering the threat of terrorism on the basis of respect for international law and the UN Charter, emphasizing that States have the primary responsibility in combating terrorism. The Ministers also stressed the need for comprehensive and balanced approach of the whole international community to effectively curb the terrorist activities, which pose a serious threat, including in the present-day pandemic environment. The Ministers welcomed the outcomes of the 5th BRICS Counter-Terrorism Group (CTWG) and its subgroups' inaugural meetings on 31 August – 2 September 2020 which further advanced BRICS cooperation in the areas of countering terrorism and its financing, foreign terrorist fighters, radicalization, the use of the Internet for terrorism purposes and capacity building. They expressed satisfaction at the approval of the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the CTWG.

24. The Ministers emphasized the need for launching multilateral negotiations on an international convention for suppression of acts of chemical and biological terrorism at the Conference on Disarmament in order to address the threat of chemical and biological terrorism.

25. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of an open, secure, stable, non-discriminatory, accessible and peaceful environment for information and communications technologies (ICTs). They emphasized the need of a comprehensive and balanced approach to ICTs development and security, including technical advancement, business development, of safeguarding the security of States and public interests, and of respecting the right to privacy of individuals. They underscored the leading role of the United Nations in promoting dialogue to forge common understandings on the security of and in the use of ICTs and development of universally agreed norms, rules and principles for responsible behavior of States in the realm of ICTs, without prejudice to other relevant international fora. They emphasized the importance of international law and principles applicable in this sphere. In this regard, they welcomed the work of the UN Open-Ended Working Group as well as of the Group of Governmental Experts and noted progress in the discussions.

26. The Ministers underscored the importance of establishing legal frameworks of cooperation among BRICS States on ensuring security in the use of ICTs. They acknowledged the work towards consideration and elaboration of proposals on this matter and took note of both the proposal by Russia on a BRICS intergovernmental agreement on cooperation on ensuring security in the use of ICTs and the Brazilian initiative towards bilateral agreements among BRICS countries on the matter. They reaffirmed the importance to advance the intra-BRICS cooperation, including through the implementation of the BRICS Roadmap of Practical Cooperation on Ensuring Security in the Use of ICTs.

27. The Ministers, while emphasizing the formidable potential of the digital revolution for growth and development, recognized new associated possibilities it brings for criminal activities and threats. The Ministers expressed concern over the rising level and complexity of criminal misuse of ICTs as well as the absence of a multilateral framework to counter crime in the realm of ICTs. They recognized also that new challenges and threats in this respect require international cooperation and discussed possible legal frameworks, including the need to elaborate a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of ICTs for criminal purposes under the auspices of the UN.

28. The Ministers welcomed the 4th Meeting of the BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group and acknowledged the importance of further developing cooperation on drug control among BRICS countries. They emphasized their commitment to the three drug control Conventions and the need to preserve the international drug control system.

29. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to promote international anti-corruption cooperation and strengthen BRICS collaboration, subject to domestic legal systems, on issues related to anti-corruption law enforcement, including on extradition of fugitives, economic and corruption offenders and in recovering stolen assets. They encouraged the BRICS Anti-Corruption Working Group to continue its work on these matters. They noted the Russian initiative on the Roadmap on organization of BRICS work on development within the UN framework of a universal international legal instrument on illicit asset recovery.

30. The Ministers commended with satisfaction that in 2020 under the Russian Chairmanship, despite the backdrop of current adverse global challenges, BRICS maintained the momentum and continuity of its activities, aimed to produce concrete results for the benefit of citizens. Russia stressed its determination to ensure the advancement of the BRICS strategic partnership in the three pillars of policy and security, economy and finance, culture and people-to-people exchanges.

31. India, China, South Africa and Brazil extended full support to Russia in hosting the 12th BRICS Summit in autumn 2020 and committed themselves to work together for its fruitful outcomes.